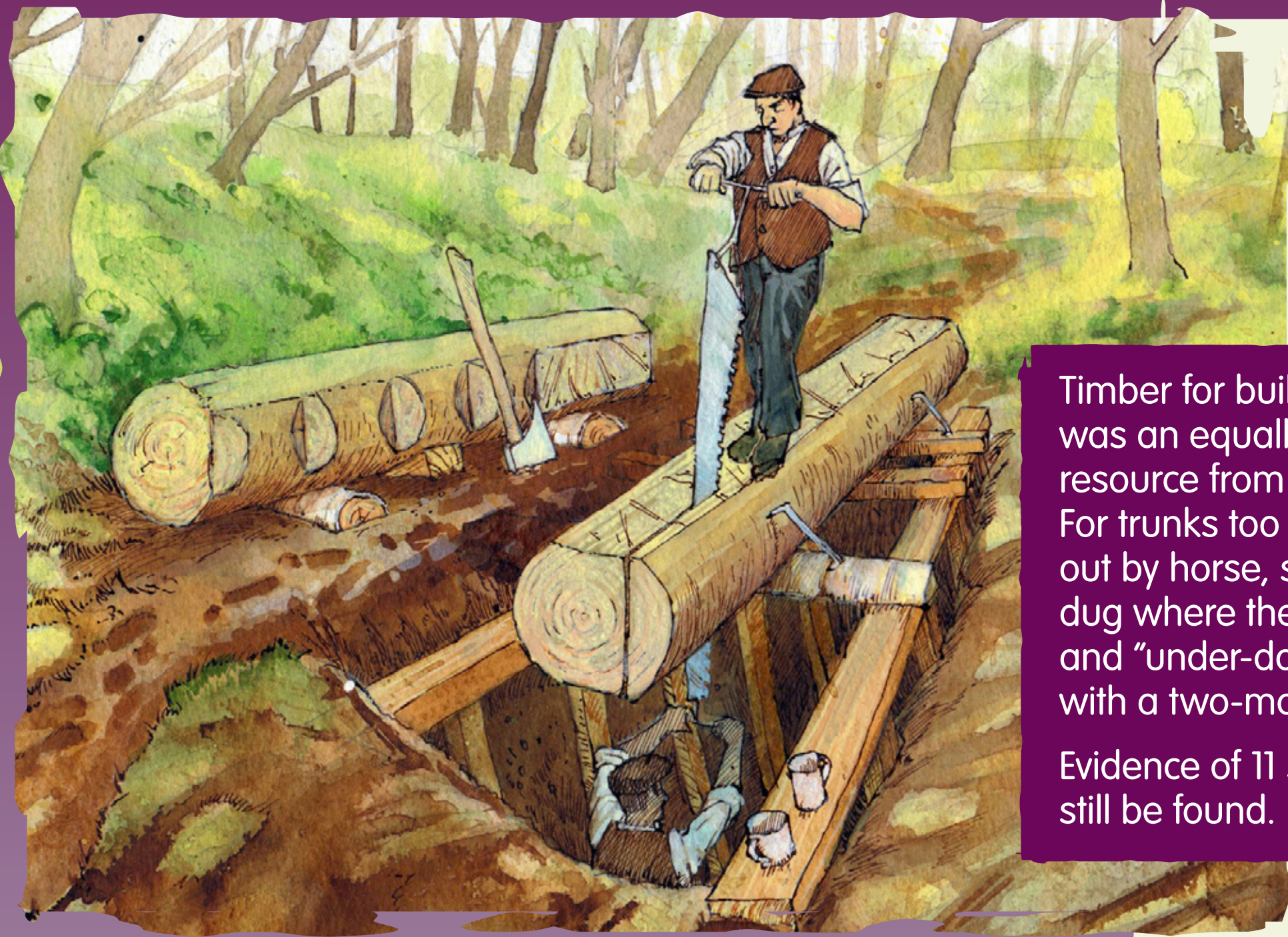


Imagine... exploring a Forest steeped in history



Timber for building and fuel was an equally important resource from the Forest. For trunks too heavy to drag out by horse, saw pits were dug where the "top-dog" and "under-dog" cut planks with a two-man saw. Evidence of 11 saw pits can still be found.

Sheffield Forest

Peel back the layers of history still visible (to a knowledgeable eye!) on site and you can discover a wood worked for hundreds of years for timber, charcoal, building materials, iron, and even rabbits!

The High Weald was famed for its iron production, which reached its peak in both Roman and Tudor times. Charcoal was the fuel needed to power the furnaces and forges. A recent Forest survey has discovered remains of no fewer than 34 charcoal burning platforms, where workers fired earth-covered clamps to convert wood cut on site.

The charcoal platforms, along with bloomery sites (a type of furnace once widely used for smelting iron) are concentrated along the sides of a Wealden gill stream. Charcoal platforms are undateable but the bloomery sites may date from the Roman period.

To find out more about local archaeology, please contact the East Sussex CC Historic Environment Record.
T: 01273 481608. E: gregory.chuter@eastsussex.gov.uk



The Forest today
The Forestry Commission currently manages 120 hectares (300 acres) of mixed deciduous and conifer woodland for timber, conservation and recreation.



16 small quarry sites have also been identified, which supplied stone or sand for building and surfacing. Good access routes to move all of these materials would also have been essential, and the Forest is criss-crossed by trackways – many sunken after centuries of use by humans, animals and carts.

Varied owners

Historical records reveal that in 1546 the Duke of Norfolk forfeited the Forest, and other land, to the Crown. In 1769, the extensive Sheffield Estate, including the Forest, was bought by the 1st Earl of Sheffield for £31,000, a not inconsiderable sum at the time! In 1910, this ownership passed to Arthur Soames.

The Forestry Commission acquired Sheffield Forest in 1953 when the Sheffield Park Estate was split up – with the famous landscape gardens passing to the National Trust.

Past Lives

A former small settlement site, with associated trackways and a small field system, was located in the south-west corner of Sheffield Forest. The Forest was also divided into separate woods and some fields with different names, such as Hob Robin, Lag Wood, and Rocky and Sandy Field.

So where do rabbits fit in?

Especially in the 14th to 17th centuries, farming rabbits for meat and fur was big business. Despite being largely wooded, this farming even reached Sheffield Forest. A lease was taken out in 1638 to create a warren – in effect a man-made rabbit farm – and one of the mounds probably created at this time still exists near the Forest's western boundary.

Our thanks go to the organisations who have supported our work at Sheffield Forest.



Local Forestry Commission Office:
Bedgebury Office, Park Lane, Goudhurst, Cranbrook, Kent TN17 2SL
T 01580 211044 E enquiries@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

www.forestry.gov.uk